Blast at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota

1022. SHRI LALIT SURI:
SHRI DATTA MEGHE:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether a major blast occurred at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on the 23rd February, 2004;

(b) if so, the number of persons who died and those seriously injured and the loss caused to Government property as a result thereof;

(c) whether the matter has been investigated;

(d) if so, by whom and the findings of the inquiry and the action taken thereon; and

(e) the measures taken by Government to check recurrence of such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) There was a fire accident at Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on 23rd February, 2004.

(b) Seven persons died and two persons were critically injured but they have been discharged from hospital after intensive medical care. The estimated material loss is about Rs. 70.00 lakhs.

(c) to (e) A High Power Committee constituted to investigate this accident has submitted its final report. The committee came to the conclusion that the primary cause of the accident was due to the propellant leak between two sliding metallic surfaces. The leaked propellant got ignited due to the friction induced heating during the removal of the casting fixtures. Action has been initiated to implement the recommendations of the Committee.

Air-Breathing Rocket Propulsion System

1023. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that ISRO is working on air-breathing rocket propulsion system which would use hydrogen as fuel and the air from atmosphere as the oxidizer to burn hydrogen;